Wei-Hwa's Guide to Blackwater 100

Version as of 01/26/96

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This sheet is written and maintained by Wei-Hwa Huang. If you have any questions or comments or additions or corrections, feel free to mail me.

This version of the Guide is preliminary, and only takes into account past postings on rec.games.pinball and my exposure with one machine.

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I use the abbreviations "K" for a thousand points and "M" for a million points.

Revision History

- 1/14 First post to rec.games.pinball. Many errors
- 1/15 Duplication of Upper Loop information fixed. Typo in introduction fixed.
- 1/26 Williams probably got all Bally Trademarks. Miscellaneous typos fixed.

Important Things

This is a glossary of the shots and features that will be referred to during the discussion of the game. The features are, in general, described from left to right within their playfield.

General

Playfields
: The game is mostly molded plastic, with three workable playfields: a raised upper playfield, a normal playfield, and a "backwards" playfield that takes the place of the usual instruction and credits sheets.

Flippers
: There are five full-length flippers - two on the upper playfield, two on the normal playfield, and one on the left side of the "backwards" playfield.

Controls
: There are two buttons on each side of the machine, white (upper) and green (lower). The white buttons control the flippers on their respective side; the green buttons lower the starting gate and select the flashing goal (see below).

Manual Plunger
: This is a normal plunger. The only purpose the plunger serves is to send the balls to the Starting Gate (see below). There is no skill shot, and one wonders why a automatic plunger wasn't used instead. Then again, considering how reliable automatic plungers were in 1988, perhaps it's just as well.

Display
: the display is composed of four banks of 7-digit 16-segment displays in a row near the bottom of the backglass.

Upper Playfield

Starting Gate

The plunger sends the balls up a molded plastic ramp that turns to the left, goes through a uni-directional swinging gate sensor while making a hairpin turn, and to a small horizontal reservoir that holds three balls. Behind the reservoir there are three lights colored red, yellow, and green respectively, with the green on the right, right above the first ball to enter the reservoir. In front of the reservoir is a metal gate that can lower and allow the balls to roll into the Starting Ramp.

Starting Ramp

After being released by the Starting Gate, the balls roll down a molded plastic ramp that makes a hairpin curve and feeds the balls right above the upper right flipper in the Right Loop. It is sometimes possible for a ball coming from the Left Loop to have enough momentum to go slightly up the Starting Ramp, but never all the way.

Right Loop

This lane goes from just right of the Upper Saucer under the Starting Gate, feeding into the upper right flipper. [Presumably,] a single rollover switch is inside the orbit. This switch lights the Left Loop, and collects 100K and advances the Bonus Multiplier when it is lit.

Rocks Targets

These are three yellow stand-up targets between the two exits of the Right Loop. They are labeled with three yellow lights (l-r): "MEAN", "MOON", and "ROCKS". The targets are at the top of a raised upward gradient, so balls need quite a lot of momentum to hit these targets. It is basically impossible to hit these targets from anything but the upper left flipper. Lighting (hitting) all three targets completes the Rocks Section.

Cliff Hanger Loop

The entrance to this loop is just to the left of the Rocks Targets, and to the right of the Right Loop entrance, and is labeled with a blue light saying "CLIFF HANGER!". It shares the raised gradient with the Rocks Targets. The loop continues around a raised half-ramp to the left, behind the Upper Saucer, and exits off a cliff slightly to the right of the Left Loop entrance. The sensor for this loop is a rollover on the section of wall (!) above and behind the Upper Saucer. Hitting the sensor lights the light and completes the Cliff Hanger Section. A ball without sufficient inertia will not traverse the entire loop; however, it only needs to hit the sensor to register. An projection in front of the sensor prevents balls from dropping into the Upper Saucer.

Upper Saucer

This saucer is located underneath the Cliff Hanger Loop and between the Right and Left Loop entrances. It functions as a ball Hold and also starts the Special Test. When ejecting, it sends the ball towards the upper right flipper. It is reachable by either upper flipper.

Left Loop

This lane goes from just left of the Upper Saucer under the Downhill Ramp, feeding into the upper left flipper. [Presumably,] a single rollover switch is inside the orbit. This switch lights the Right Loop, and collects 100K and advances the Bonus Multiplier when lit. The Loop has a standard white light near its entrance. The Hill Climb Ramp feeds into this Loop, usually coming out near the typical exit, but coming out the "entrance" if the ball has enough inertia.

Downhill Ramp

This is a steep ramp that only the upper right flipper can send a ball to. A ball sent up this ramp goes through a bidirectional swinging gate to a raised platform at the upper left of the machine. It then triggers a gate sensor, lighting the red light that says "DOWNHILL!" and finishing the Downhill Section. The ball rolls down the narrowing platform down the left edge of the machine, down and up a dip, and is deposited right "above" the backwards flipper in the Backwards Playfield. This ramp is also part of the Special Test.

Bog Targets

These are three stand-up targets between the Downhill Ramp entrance and the Left Loop. Unlike the Rocks Targets, these targets are not raised and are as a consequence easier to hit, the fact that balls load to the upper right flipper notwithstanding. They are labeled with three green lights (l-r): "BIG", "BAD", "BOG". Lighting (hitting) all three targets completes the Bog Section.

Center Pin

This is a triangular shaped bumper between the upper flippers, decorated on top with a sign saying "DAVIS W. Va.". The consequence of this bumper is that balls rarely go SDTM from the Upper Playfield, and that a skilled player can keep balls in the Upper Playfield for quite some time.

Slingshots

The Upper Playfield has no slingshots.

Exits

A ball can exit the Upper Playfield only by leaving below the upper flippers to the Lower Playfield, or via the Downhill Ramp to the Backwards Playfield.

Lower Playfield

Lower Saucer
: This saucer is located right above the right outlane, although it is separated from the latter by two pins. It functions as a ball Hold. Balls exiting the right side of the Backwards Playfield get deposited to this saucer; if there is already a ball in the saucer the ball drops to the left near the right inlane. It is also reachable by the lower left flipper, and is the final part of the Special Test.

Hwy 93
: This is a steep ramp just above the Lower Saucer that runs along a wall, hits a gate sensor jutting out of the wall at its peak, and ends just above the upper right flipper in the Upper Playfield. It has a red light labeled "HWY 93!" that lights and completes the Hwy 93 Section when the sensor is triggered. It is possible to send the ball up the ramp and fall short of hitting the sensor, even to the extent that the upper right flipper can catch it. (I have never been able to score Hwy 93 from a held ball on the lower left flipper; there just isn't enough momentum the flipper can impart to the ball.)

Lower Loop
: This is a loop that goes under the Upper Playfield and has two exits. There are a sufficient number of sensors (of unknown type, but probably roll-over) that can detect which way the ball is going through the loop. The right exit is more easily entered from the lower left flipper and deposits balls to the right flipper, and vice versa for the other exit. This means that it is easier to make consecutive loops in the same direction than it is to alternate directions. Each direction/entrance has its own sets of lights that award up to three point values (white lights) and a Save-It! (large orange light) each.

Swamp Targets
: This is a row of five drop-targets between the two exits of the Lower Loop. Each target has a "S" logo on it (Suzuki was one of the sponsors). There are five green lights below the targets, in two rows of three and two, labeled (l-r,u-d) "NEVER", "ENDIN", "BIKE", "SUCKIN", "SWAMP". The lights do NOT correspond to the targets; rather, one light lights up in sequence every time all the targets are knocked down and the bank is reset. (If the target bank is faulty, it is possible to register a target as "down" even though it is not physically down.) Lighting up all the lights (hitting all five targets five times) completes the Swamp Section.

Hill Climb Ramp
: This is a wide, shallow ramp to the left of the left Lower Loop exit that is reachable by the lower right flipper and deposits the ball into the Left Loop in the Upper Playfield. A (probably roll-over) sensor is located very near the top of the ramp that lights the yellow light labeled "HILL CLIMB!" at the base of the ramp for the Hill Climb Section. Although significantly easier than Hwy 93, the Hill Climb Ramp has two problems: (1) The sensor can be triggered without the ball actually getting to the Upper Playfield, at which point the ball surprisingly comes back down very close to the middle; and (2) there is an unprotected inset light bulb right in the middle of the ramp near the entrance, and the ball can lose quite a bit of momentum when skipping over this "bump".

Rapids Targets
: These are four stand-up targets to the left of the Hill Climb Ramp just above the left in/outlanes. They are labeled with blue lights (u-d): "COLD", "WET", "ROCKY", "RAPIDS". Lighting (hitting) all four completes the Rapids Section. These targets are barely hittable from the lower right flipper.

Left Outlane
: This lane collects Save-It! when lit (with a orange light).

Left Inlane
: This lane collects Special when lit (with a red light). Balls exiting the left side of the Backwards Playfield get deposited here.

Slingshots
: Normal configuration.

Right Inlane
: This lane collects Special when lit (with a red light). The light indicating that Save-It! is collected is also located here, right above the lower right flipper (there isn't much visibility below the two flippers where an extra-ball light would typically go).

Right Outlane

This lane collects Save-It! when lit (with a orange light).

Exits
: A ball can leave the playfield by either going to the Upper Playfield via Hwy 93 or Hill Climb, or by draining.

Drains
: Either outlane or STDM. All three of these exits are hard to get to, especially the outlanes, so many Save-It!s go uncollected.

Backwards Playfield

Description
: This playfield is located where the instructions and pricing card are usually located, and slants down *away* from the player. Hence, "above" will be used to mean *towards* the player, and "below" will be used to mean *away* from the player.

Flipper
: A single flipper on the left side that flips "upwards" *towards* the player. The only entrance to the Backwards Playfield is from the Downhill Ramp in the Upper Playfield, and it deposits a ball right "above" the flipper.

R
: A-I-N targets - these are four stand-up targets located right in the middle. Hitting all of these targets raises the Playfield Multiplier. They each have an associated blue light.

Fast Line!
: This is a curve on the lower "above" right of the playfield. At the corner of the curve is a single gate sensor flanked by a pin and the wall. If the player manages to trigger this gate, typically the flashing Section is awarded. The only way to trigger the Fast Line! is a perfect shot from the flipper.

Exits
: If the ball settles on the left side, it rolls down past the flipper (no hope of touching it) to the left inlane in the Lower Playfield. If it settles on the right side (e.g., from the Fast Line!), the ball gets sent towards the Lower Saucer in the Lower Playfield.

Gameplay

Players

Up to four players can be registered, each with their own 7-character bank. Each player finishes a Heat and all Save-It!s before play continues to the next player.

Balls

Instead of the typical pinball game which gives 1 ball until it drains for three times, Blackwater 100 gives 3 "Heats" of at least three balls each. For each Heat, three balls must be loaded to the Starting Gate, at which point the Starting Countdown begins. An extra credit can buy in anywhere from 1 to 3 extra Heats, depending on operator setting. The player has 15 seconds after Heat 3 to press the start button to continue. Pressing either green button cancels the Buy-In. Supposedly there exist some machines with replaced ROMs that only give one ball per heat, but I have yet to see one.

Playfield Multiplier

By getting to the Backwards Playfield multiple times, you can hit the R-A-I-N targets to increase the Playfield Multiplier. The targets stay lit between Heats. Lighting all of them raises the Playfield Multiplier to 2x, lighting them again raises it to 3x, and again for a maximum of 4x. This is quite lucrative as *every* score gets that multiplier for the rest of that Heat, including Save-Its! and the Bonus. Note that although it displays your normal bonus, the multiple bonus is added to your score. After the Heat, the multiplier goes away..

Starting Countdown

While the balls are being loaded, the red light flickers indefinitely. After the three balls are loaded, the right-most display shows "READY", "SET", and "GO" with the red, yellow, and green lights lit respectively for each stage. The duration of the red and yellow lights are identical, although it varies between Heats; the entire sequence can range from about 3/4 second to 3 seconds. After the Starting Countdown begins, the Starting Gate is lowered when "GO" appears or a green button is pressed, whichevery comes first. The player gets a bonus when the green button is pressed while "GO" is lit; pressing it at the exact time "GO" goes on scores a hole shot (the back display says "HOLSHOT" of 250K and automatically completes the flashing Section. Pressing slightly later gives scores ranging from 100k to 30k (perhaps lower), depending on the reaction time, the quicker the better. Pressing early (during the red or yellow lights) results in a "TOO EARLY FOR BONUS" message and no points. Paradoxically, it seems easier to get a Holshot with a fast countdown than it is with a slow one.

Laps

The object of the game is to finish three laps of eight Sections each. Finishing a lap allows one to attempt a Special Test. I don't know what happens when three laps are finished; I've only been able to finish one. Each finished lap is indicated by a white light in the lower playfield right above the lower flippers.

Sections

Completing all eight Sections finishes a lap. In the center of Lower Playfield is a ring of eight lights corresponding to the eight Sections. They are labeled, counter-clockwise from upper left, "DOWNHILL!", "BOG!", "HILL CLIMB!", "RAPIDS!", "HWY 93!", "SWAMP!", "ROCKS!", and "CLIFF HANGER!", corrseponding to the Downhill Section, Bog Section, Hill Climb Section, Rapids Section, Hwy 93 Section, Swamp Section, Rocks Section, and Cliff Hanger Section, respectively. The progress towards Sections are not reset after each Heat.

The Flashing Section

Except during completion of a lap or in the middle of the Special task, one light in the ring is flashing (called the Flashing Section), and each of the other lights is either unlit, or steady. A steady light means that the Section is completed. The corresponding unclaimed targets in the Flashing section also start flashing.

Pressing the left green button moves the Flashing Section counter-clockwise to the next incomplete Section, and pressing the right green button moves the Flashing Section clockwise to the next incomplete Section, except during the bonus count, a tilt warning, or a tilt. (Note that this does not exclude loading the Starting Gate, or even dropping the Starting Gate during the Starting Countdown.)

Making progress or completing a Flashing Section generally scores twice as many points than if the Section was not the Flashing Section. If the Flashing Section is completed, the next goal in counter-clockwise order becomes the next Flashing Section. Also, besides the light in the ring flashing, the actual target lights corresponding to the Flashing Section that are not already lit will flash as well.

After each Heat, the Flashing Section is reset to the Downhill Section, or the next incompleted goal clockwise of it.

There are two ways of completing the Flashing Section without actually hitting the necessary targets for it:

1. Making a Holshot during the Starting Countdown; and
2. Making a successful Fast Line! shot.

The Swamp

A few things about the Swamp target should be mentioned:

To finish the Swamp Section, the player must hit 5 targets five times, for 25 hits total. Every time all the targets are hit down, the player scores 25K, a Swamp light goes one steady, and the next light to be collected starts flashing. When the Flashing Target is the Swamp, it flashes at a higher rate.

Although the targets pop up after each heat, the number of previous hits *is* remembered, so if you lost one heat with only one Swamp target up, you only need to hit one more target next heat to get a Swamp Light.

Bonus Multipliers

Triggering an Upper Loop lights the loop on the other side for a short time. Scoring a lit Upper Loop (Left or Right) nets 100K and advances the Bonus Multiplier, which can go up to 4x.

Special

Shooting the Upper Loops alternating Left and Right rapidly for 5 times lights the Special (a free game) in the inlanes.

Scoring Sections

	Description	Unlit	Flashing	Steady
Completing a Section	50K	100K	N/A	
Each Rapids Target	2K	5K	2K	
Hill Climb Section	25K	50K	25K	
Each Bog Target	2K	5K	2K	
Downhill Section	50K	100K	50K	
Cliff Hanger Section	25K	50K	25K	
Each Rocks Target	2K	5K	2K	
Each Swamp Target	2K	5K	2K	
Every 5 Targets	25K	25K	25K	
Hwy 93 Section	25K	50K	25K	

Note that completing a section is separate from the actual hit, so going through Hwy 93 when it is unlit gets 25K+50K = 75K points.

The minimal number of points for finishing the course is then 720K, and can go as high as 1475K if the Flashing Section is used wisely. This is not counting extra bonuses and hits of flashing targets, of course.

Special Test

After finishing all goals in a lap, the music changes, the goal lights start flashing in a pattern, and the player has to try a special task. [I suspect something is wrong with this on my machine.] First, the player must drain all but one ball in this heat. An unlimited amount of time is given for the player to shoot the remaining ball to the Upper Saucer. During this time, all targets add to the Special Bonus, which starts at 1M.

After shooting into the Upper Saucer, the music changes, the goal lights flash in another pattern, and the Upper Saucer ejects the ball. The player has 25(?) seconds to shoot the Downhill Ramp, and then take the right exit to the Lower Saucer. Doing so scores the Special Bonus and lights the Special.

The Special Test is ended when:

1. It is completed; OR
2. the 25-second countdown expires; OR
3. the ball drains.

The Lower Loop and Save-It!s

Hitting the ball through the Lower Loop in one direction the first time scores 5K, and subsequent shots through the Lower Loop in that same direction will score 10K, then 25K, then 50K and a Save-It!, at which point a next shot scores 10K, and the cycle repeats. Shooting a ball through in the other direction stacks in the same way, and does not cancel progress on the other side. It is possible for both outlanes to be lit with Save-It!s.

The series is reset after each Heat.

Pressing either green button switches the two directions. Hence, a skilled player could potentially get a Save-It! earlier by hitting a green button if the ball is not on the correct side.

Lighting a Save-It! lights a flashing orange light on one of the outlanes. Pressing either green button switches the light to the other outlane. This is the equivalent of an extra ball; if a ball rolls down an outlane that has Save-It! lit, the Save-It! light next to the right flipper goes on, and the player gets to shoot another ball into play after all balls this heat are drained. This extra ball does not enter a Starting Countdown.

If a Save-It! is not collected, it stays lit until the game is over.

Ball Holds

Ball Holds function like the "Lock"s in typical pinball machines. If there is more than 1 ball in play, the Saucers function as Ball Holds:

- An empty saucer will have its "HOLD" light flashing. When a ball gets caught in the saucer, the HOLD light will go out, the player will get (?) points, and the ball will be held.
- When a ball has been held for (?) seconds, the saucer will "rev up" (nice sound effect), the HOLD light will start flashing, and the saucer will eject the ball.
- When only two balls are in play and both are in saucers, the one that was caught less recently will "rev up" and eject, even if (?) seconds have not passed yet.

If there is only one ball left in play:

- If it is in a saucer, the saucer will "rev up" and eject the ball.
- If it enters a saucer, the saucer will "rev up" and eject the ball, but the 25K light in front of the saucer will go on, and all subsequent captures by the saucer with that ball will be worth 25K.

Apparently some later versions do not have the ball "revving up"; certain people started thinking that it was a malfunction.

End-of-Ball Bonus

The Bonus is rather straightforward.

- Each Lap scores 100K.
- Each completed Section Scores 10K.
- Each target in a partially complete Section scores 2K.
- The entire sum is then multiplied by the Bonus Multiplier.
- The resulting sum is the bonus.
- If there is a playfield mutiplier, the bonus is scored that many times into the score.

Replays

Replays are awarded for each of the following:

1. Getting a Special
2. Finishing the Special Task

3. Beating a self-adjusting score of about 1.1M
4. Beating 2M (operator adjustable)
5. Beating the high score

Ball Savers

None known. However, sometimes if too many balls were drained together, the drain would choke and throw one ball back into play.

Miscellaneous Scoring

More Info needed.

Tips, Tricks, Strategies

Instead of flipping wildly with the upper flippers, try catching balls. It can be done, and it's easier than you might expect.

I usually find Cliff Hanger and Hwy 93 the hardest Sections, since the flippers on my machine are weak and both of these shots are impossible from a held ball. When I begin I make Cliff Hanger the Flashing Section before I load the balls, and I attempt the Hotshot with the **left** green button. This has the effect of immediately making Downhill the Flashiing Section whether I make the Potshot or not, and it's a good shot from the upper right flipper.

In general, take advantage of lulls to move the Flashing Section to what you're most likely to get next. In the Lower Playfield, I usually try

1. Rapids
2. Hill Climb
3. Swamp
4. Hwy 93

In the Upper Playfield, I try

1. Bog
2. Hill Climb
3. Rocks
4. Cliff Hanger

although usually I have time to catch the ball and select the one on the correct side.

When the ball is in the lower playfield, keep the Flashing Target on Rapids. Whenever you try to make a Hill Climb shot with the right flipper, hit both white and green buttons on that side to more the Flashing Target to Hill Climb right before it is claimed.

Try to get into the saucers often. That way, you'll have fewer balls to contend with -- for a while.

A skilled player should never lose balls down outlanes, especially the left one.

Try **very** hard to get the Bonus Multipliers. If you can get them consistently, the 2M replay should be accessible every time.

Trick Shots

None known.

Known Bugs

There are no ball searches.

This was one of the earliest games to use opto sensors, and it uses them on only one place: the ball trough. Therefore, the game has an annoying tendency to not know where the balls are. What would happen is:

1. Two balls get sent in front of the plunger. It takes good skill and timing to get the balls up to the Starting Gate, the reward of which is usually one ball up to the Starting Gate will start the countdown, leaving one ball still at the plunger and only two balls in play, a much more controllable situation.

2. All the balls would drain, but the CPU would think that balls were still out there. Even tilting the machine doesn't help in this situation; it must be turned off and on again.

Sometimes if too many balls were drained together, the drain would choke and throw one ball back into play.

Cheats

Sometimes the Starting Gate will drop and only one or two balls start to roll. If that happens, be happy; you'll have less balls to control, and you can easily knock the extra ball into play later. Just be patient when all balls are locked in saucers. This also happens when two balls get sent in front of the plunger and you only put one through.

Death Saves and Bang Backs

I've never done any, but the low degree of visibility makes me think that they are probably difficult on this machine. Also, since the drain is on the left side, Death Saves are probably completely impossible since the space underneath the left flipper is barely large enough to fit the ball!

Tournament Mode

More Info Needed.

Easter Eggs

None known.

Music

Mostly banjo bluegrass music. You might like it; you might find it really annoying.

Sounds

- "Yee-hah!": Registering Hwy 93
- "Woo-hah!": Registering Hill Climb
- Motorcycle speeding: Going through Lower Loop
- Motorcycle getting ready: Starting Countdown
- Motorcycle revving up: right before Saucer Ejection

Stats

Blackwater 100
Bally Manufacturing Corporation, March 1988, 4 players

- Theme: Sports - Motorcycles/Motocross
- Design: Dennis Nordman
- Art: Tony Ramunni
- Program:Gary Oglesby

- Sounds: Neil Falconer
- Special Thanks: Dave and Rita Coombs

Manual #:0365-00H07-1001 for game 0H07

[Bally was sold to Williams in July 1988, making this the last "true" Bally pinball game.]

Unconfirmed Rumors

A very low production run. (likely)

Some (test?) machines have dollar bill acceptors.

Is this the first game with Buy-Ins?

Known Sequels?

- Whitewater
- Banzai Run

Credits

This is the first attempt at writing a rule sheet. Thanks go to:

- Kevin Martin, who first requested a rule sheet and whose Twilight Zone rule sheet I shamelessly stole the format from;
- Doug MacKenzie, my local game room manager;
- The rec.games.pinball archive (of course); and the following people who posted on rec.games.pinball:
- TJ Beyer
- George Peran
- S M Carless
- michael.j.knudsen
- _bill
- donald.w.coons
- Larry DeMar
- Jerry C Carathers